THE TALE OF BUSTER BUMBLEBEE

ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

TUCK-ME-IN TALES

"It's All Right," Said Solomon

The Ant Soldiers Rushed at Daddy

Mrs. Ladybug Directs Mr. Potato Bug.

"What's The Joke?" Asked Rusty Wren

THE TALE OF BUSTER BUMBLEBEE

TUCK-ME-IN TALES

(Trademark Registered)

BY

ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

AUTHOR OF

SLEEPY-TIME TALES

(Trademark Registered)

THE TALE OF JOLLY ROBIN
THE TALE OF OLD MR. CROW
THE TALE OF SOLOMON OWL
THE TALE OF JASPER JAY
THE TALE OF RUSTY WREN
THE TALE OF DADDY LONGLEGS
THE TALE OF KIDDIE KATYDID
THE TALE OF BUSTER BUMBLEBEE
THE TALE OF FREDDIE FIREFLY
THE TALE OF BETSY BUTTERFLY
THE TALE OF BOBBY BOBOLINK
THE TALE OF CHIRPY CRICKET
THE TALE OF MRS. LADYBUG
THE TALE OF REDDY WOODPECKER
THE TALE OF GRANDMOTHER GOOSE

Buster Thanks Old Mr. Crow For His Advice.

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ILLUSTRATED BY
HARRY L. SMITH

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

Made in the United States of America

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THE TALE OF BUSTER BUMBLEBEE

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THE BIG FAMILY

When Mrs. Field Mouse moved from her home in Farmer Green's meadow to the more fashionable neighborhood near the gristmill, she had no idea that anyone would care to live in the little old house that she had left.

So she was much surprised, the following summer, when she heard that a new family was occupying her former home.

"If it's a small family they'll get along

well enough," she remarked to Aunt Polly Woodchuck, who had told her the news.

"Small!" Aunt Polly exclaimed, lifting both her hands (with the black mitts on them) high in the air. "They say it's a dreadful big family—at least two hundred of 'em, so I've been told."

Well, for a moment Mrs. Field Mouse couldn't say a word, she was so astonished. Then she managed to gasp:

"What's their name?"

"I declare, I can't just remember," said Aunt Polly Woodchuck. "But it's a name that rhymes with *apple tree*—though that's not quite it. . . . They're a very musical family, I understand. My nephew, Billy Woodchuck, passed right by their door only yesterday; and he says he heard music and the sound of dancing from inside the house."

"Two hundred of them dancing in that

little house!" cried Mrs. Field Mouse. "Why, it's positively dangerous! I should think they'd trample one another."

And Aunt Polly Woodchuck agreed, before she went off towards her home under the hill, that there were queer goings-on over there in the meadow.

Later she sent her nephew Billy to tell Mrs. Field Mouse that on her way home she had remembered the name of the big family. It was *Bumblebee.*

"They must be an odd lot," Mrs. Field Mouse remarked to her husband. "Farmer Green's meadow is becoming more unfashionable than ever. And I shall never regret having moved away from there."

So that was Buster Bumblebee's first home—the old house in the meadow. It was true that the Bumblebee family numbered at least two hundred souls. Nobody knew what the exact count might have

been; for in the daytime all the members of the family were bustling about, never staying in one place long enough to be counted. And at night they were all too drowsy to bother their heads over anything but sleep.

It was true, too, that the Bumblebee family filled their house almost to overflowing—especially when they began to store away great quantities of honey in it. But they never seemed to mind being crowded. And if any of them wanted more room he had only to go out of doors and get it.

Buster Bumblebee's mother was the head of the whole family. Everybody always spoke of her as "the Queen." And she never had to lift her hand, because there were other members of the family that were both ready and eager to do everything for her. She was really quite a fine lady.

And it was generally understood that her son Buster favored his mother. Certainly he was—like her—very handsome, in his suit of black and yellow velvet. Like his mother, too, he never did a stroke of work. And although everybody said that Buster Bumblebee was a drone, he never seemed to mind it in the least.

II

CHIRPY CRICKET'S ADVICE

If the summers in Pleasant Valley had been longer perhaps the honey-makers in Buster Bumblebee's home would have taken a holiday now and then. But they knew that every day that passed brought cold weather that much the nearer. So they never once stopped working—except to sleep at night. And, like Farmer Green himself, they felt that they must not waste any of the precious daylight by lying abed late in the morning. They wanted to be up and in the clover field as soon as it was light.

Now, with Rusty Wren living right beneath his bedroom window to wake him at dawn, Farmer Green had no trouble in getting up in good season. But the Bumblebee family were in no such luck. Even if Rusty Wren had lived near them in the meadow they could scarcely have heard his dawn song, because their home was beneath the surface of the ground, in the old house that had once belonged to Mrs. Field Mouse.

If they could have found an alarm clock somewhere it would have been easy for them to rise as early in the morning as they wished. But lacking a clock of that kind—or any other—they had to find a different way of waking themselves.

That was why the workers chose one of their number to be a trumpeter. And it was her duty to get up bright and early, at three or four o'clock, and trumpet

loudly to rouse all the other workers.

How the trumpeter herself managed to awake is something that never bothered anybody else. It was her business not to oversleep. And she knew that it would be very unpleasant for her if she failed even once to do her duty.

Now, it was all well enough for the workers to have the morning silence broken by the blare of trumpeting. They were eager to get up and begin their day's work. But Buster Bumblebee did not like that arrangement in the least. He preferred a good, long night's sleep. And since he never did any work he thought it was a shame that he should be rudely awakened in such a fashion.

At home, however, he did not mention his grievance to anyone. But he talked the matter over with a number of his friends—outside the family. And one and

all agreed that something ought to be done to put a stop to the trumpeter's noise.

"Why don't you have a pleasant talk with her?" Chirpy Cricket suggested. "Perhaps she would be willing to trumpet a little more softly if she knew that she was disturbing you."

That plan did not quite suit Buster Bumblebee.

"It would be hard to have a pleasant talk with the trumpeter," he said. "She's quite likely to lose her temper. And she might sting me if she became angry enough."

"Then you must first put her in a good humor," Chirpy Cricket told him cheerfully. "Begin by saying what a good trumpeter she is and tell her that her hat is *very* becoming."

Still Buster Bumblebee was a bit doubtful of the outcome of the scheme. But at

last he agreed to give it a trial. "Though I must say I feel quite nervous," he added. And all Chirpy Cricket's sprightly jokes failed to make Buster smile.

III

THE RUDE TRUMPETER

YES! At last Buster Bumblebee was worried. Every time he looked at the trumpeter she seemed in a more peppery temper than ever. Beside her, some of the other workers appeared positively pleasant. But the trumpeter wore a frown. And what was still worse, she wore no hat.

How, then, was Buster to follow Chirpy Cricket's advice and tell her what a becoming hat she was wearing?

"I'll have to think of some other way of making her feel happy—since she's bareheaded," said Buster.

Now, without thinking what he was doing he had spoken his thought right out loud. And since he was quite near the trumpeter and staring directly at her, it was no wonder that she heard what he said.

"Don't be impertinent, young man!" the trumpeter snapped, growing somewhat red in the face. "I'm sure it's no affair of yours whether I wear a hat or whether I don't. And if you want to make me happy, I'll tell you the best way in the world."

"Oh! Will you?" cried Buster Bumblebee hopefully. And in his eagerness he drew even nearer to the trumpeter, who actually smiled at him. But there was something in her smile that sent a shiver up and down Buster's back. It was not at all a pleasant smile.

"If you want to make me happy all you need do is to keep out of my sight," said

the trumpeter rudely. "You're just a lazy, good-for-nothing drone. And for my part, I don't see why you're allowed to stay in our house. If I had my way you'd be driven out into the world to shift for yourself. . . . And I know others who say the same."

Upon hearing that disagreeable speech Buster Bumblebee jumped back quickly. He was not angry—but merely disappointed, for he had expected something quite different.

"You—er—you trumpet beautifully," he stammered, remembering that that was another remark which Chirpy Cricket had suggested as being likely to put the trumpeter into a pleasant frame of mind.

At that the rude creature laughed most scornfully.

"I'd like to know how you can say *that,*" she sneered. "You're so lazy and such a

sleepy-head that you never hear me when I wake the household. In fact, I don't believe you would ever wake up enough to crawl out of bed if you didn't get hungry—and goodness knows you do love to eat."

"No such thing!" cried Buster Bumblebee.

And happening just at that moment to spy an unusually tempting clover-top close beside him, he lighted upon it and began to suck up its sweet juices.

The trumpeter at once screamed joyfully and pointed a finger straight at him.

"There you go!" she cried. "You have to stop and eat even while you're talking with a lady! Why, you eat and sleep so much that you don't know what you're doing or saying half the time."

One might naturally think that such a remark would have angered Buster. But he was not one to lose his temper easily.

And he merely looked at the trumpeter sadly and said:

"Don't speak to me like that! I'm a queen's son. I'm a gentleman."

IV

BUSTER FINDS A SISTER

Buster Bumblebee's announcement that he was a queen's son—and a gentleman—seemed to amuse the trumpeter hugely. She held her sides and laughed uproariously.

"That's nothing!" she said at last. "I'm one myself!"

"One what?" Buster asked her quickly. "You're certainly no gentleman—for you just referred to yourself as a lady not two minutes ago. And neither can you be anybody's son, I should think."

"I mean I'm a queen's daughter—though

maybe you didn't know it," the trumpeter replied.

And Buster Bumblebee answered in a dazed fashion that he had had no idea she was of royal blood, like himself.

"It's true," the trumpeter assured him. "You'd never guess it; but I'm your own sister."

Well, Buster Bumblebee was so surprised that he almost fell off the clover-head on which he was sitting. It was really a sad blow to be told that that disagreeable, vixenish trumpeter, who awakened the workers each morning, was so closely related to him. But it was no more than he might have expected, living as he did in a family of more than two hundred souls.

"It's—it's hard to believe," he gasped, shaking his head slowly.

"It certainly is," said the trumpeter. "I

don't understand how my own brother can be so lazy as you are."

"It's not that I'm lazy—it's the way my mother brought me up," Buster protested.

"*Our* mother, you mean," the trumpeter corrected him. "Maybe you're right. . . . After all, you'd only be in everybody's way if you tried to work—you're so awkward and clumsy. So maybe it's just as well for you to play the gentleman—though you must find it a dull life."

"It suits me," said Buster. "But I do wish you could manage to rouse the workers in the morning without disturbing me." He was bolder, now that he knew he was talking to his own sister.

The trumpeter pondered for a little time before replying.

"It's my duty to trumpet loudly," she said at last. "The summer is none too long. And there's a great deal of honey

to be made before fall. . . . Have you thought of stuffing your ears with cotton?" she inquired.

"Why, no!" said Buster Bumblebee. "That's a fine plan, I'm sure. And I'll follow it this very night."

So he thanked his new-found sister and said good-by, for he wanted to look for some cotton at once.

"Goodness me!" the trumpeter exclaimed as soon as Buster had left her. "Here I've wasted a precious quarter of an hour when I should have been working." Thereupon she began gathering nectar as fast as she could, and forgot all about Buster Bumblebee and his trouble.

When he left the trumpeter in the clover field, Buster was feeling quite cheerful. Although Chirpy Cricket's advice had been of little use to him, Buster's talk with the trumpeter had ended pleasantly enough.

And now he expected that he would be able to sleep as late as he pleased—with the help of a bit of cotton.

Buster flew fast, as he left the fragrant clover behind him, to hunt for the cotton that he needed. But he soon paused in his rapid flight and sat down on a sprig of honeysuckle, to think.

He was puzzled. He hadn't the slightest idea where he could find any cotton. So what was the use of hurrying, if he didn't know where he was going?

V

MR. CROW TO THE RESCUE

As Buster sat on the sprig of wild honeysuckle, wondering where to look for a bit of cotton with which to stuff his ears, a bird fluttered down and perched upon the old stone wall to which the honeysuckle clung. The name of the newcomer was Jasper Jay. And Buster Bumblebee was glad to see him, because he wanted help from somebody and he didn't care who it was.

"Where could a person get a small piece of cotton?" he asked Jasper Jay.

And Jasper—who would gladly have made a lunch of Buster, had he not been

afraid of getting stung—Jasper promptly replied with another question:

"What do you intend to do with cotton?" He was a very curious fellow, this Jasper Jay.

Buster Bumblebee had no objection to explaining everything to him. And then —and only then—was Jasper willing to tell what he knew.

"Cotton—" said he—"cotton grows in fields. I know that much. And what's more, I know it doesn't grow in Pleasant Valley, for I live here the whole year round and I've never seen any."

That was bad news for Buster.

"What do you advise me to do?" he inquired anxiously.

"Ask my cousin, Mr. Crow," said Jasper Jay instantly. "He's a great traveller. Spends his winters in the South, *he* does. And no doubt he can help you."

"Where can I find Mr. Crow?" Buster Bumblebee asked.

"I don't know of any better place to look than the cornfield," Jasper Jay told him.

Luckily Buster knew where the cornfield was. So he started off at once to find Mr. Crow.

And sure enough! as soon as Buster reached the edge of the cornfield, there was the old gentleman, sitting on the topmost rail of the fence and looking as if he had just enjoyed an excellent meal.

As soon as he saw that Buster Bumblebee wanted to talk with him, old Mr. Crow was willing enough to listen, for he always liked to know about other people's affairs. He kept nodding his head with a wise air while Buster explained to him how he wished to find some cotton, with which to stuff his ears every night, so that he might not be disturbed when the trumpeter

aroused the household at three or four o'clock each morning.

"That's a splendid plan," said old Mr. Crow when Buster had finished. "An excellent plan—but you may as well forget it, because there's no cotton growing in these parts. Cotton grows in the South, more than a thousand miles away. Next winter when I go to the South I might be able to find some for you, and bring it back with me in the spring. But that wouldn't help you now."

Buster Bumblebee was quite discouraged. And since he didn't know what to do, he asked Mr. Crow what he would suggest.

"Why don't you set back the hands of the family clock?" the old gentleman asked. "If you make the clock three or four hours slow the trumpeter won't trumpet until six or seven or eight o'clock. And I'm sure

that's late enough for anybody to get up."

Buster shook his head mournfully.

"We haven't any clock at our house," he explained.

"Then——" said old Mr. Crow, "then, if you want more sleep why don't you go to bed earlier? If you went to bed three or four hours before sunset you wouldn't mind getting up at dawn."

"Hurrah!" Buster shouted. "That's just what I'll do! And I'm certainly much obliged to you, Mr. Crow, for helping me."

"Don't mention it," said the old gentleman, looking greatly pleased with himself.

"I won't tell anybody," Buster promised.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, exactly," Mr. Crow told him hastily. "If you want to

inform your friends how clever I am, I have no objection, of course."

Then Buster went off, thinking what a kind person old Mr. Crow was. And that very afternoon, long before sunset, he curled himself up in an out-of-the-way corner of the house and went to sleep. Everybody was so busy hurrying in and out in order to finish the day's work that no one noticed or disturbed him. And when the trumpeter sounded the rising call the next morning Buster Bumblebee was actually the first one in the house to open his eyes and jump up and hasten out to get his breakfast.

All of which only went to prove that old Mr. Crow knew a thing or two—and maybe even more.

VI

JOHNNIE GREEN IS STUNG

THERE had been so much rain early in the summer that even by the middle of August Farmer Green had not been able to finish his haying. His son Johnnie was sorry, too—because he had to work in the hot hayfield almost every day, when he would far rather have gone swimming in the mill-pond, under the shade of the great willow.

Sometimes Johnnie rode on the hayrake. And since he liked to drive the old horse Ebenezer, he didn't object to that part of his duties so much. What he hated most was pitching hay with a pitchfork. And

next to that, he disliked going to the spring for a jugful of water.

But those unpleasant tasks were nothing at all compared with what happened to him one day when he stepped squarely upon the doorway of the Bumblebee family's house.

Johnnie's carelessness made the workers angry at once. And several of them rushed out and stung Johnnie Green severely.

Then *he* was angry. And he declared he would "fix them"—as soon as he could think of a good way to do it.

And that very afternoon, while he was bringing the heavy jug from the spring, Johnnie Green thought of a fine plan for punishing the Bumblebee family. He liked his plan so well that he could hardly wait to try it; and he went back to the hayfield almost at a run, whereas he usually saun-

tered along so slowly that his father often had to speak to him somewhat sharply.

But this time Farmer Green could not complain. Johnnie even brought the jug —and the tin cup too—to the knoll in the meadow where his father and the hired man were working. And then Farmer Green said:

"How are your stings now?"

"Awful!" Johnnie informed him hopefully.

"Maybe you'd like to stop work for the rest of the day and go swimming," said Farmer Green, with a wink at the hired man, "unless you're feeling too miserable," he added.

"Oh, yes! Oh, no!" cried Johnnie. "My stings aren't too bad for that!" And he started off at once across the field, taking the jug with him.

"I'll leave the jug among the brakes in

the fence-corner," he called, as he trotted away.

Now, Johnnie Green took the jug with him because he needed it. It was part of his plan for punishing the Bumblebee family. And instead of going straight to the fence-corner, Johnnie made at once for the Bumblebee family's front door. As soon as he reached it he poured some of the water out of the jug—but not all of it. Then he put his ear to the jug's mouth and listened. And he smiled happily—in spite of his stings—as he heard the roar from inside it.

Buster Bumblebee, hurrying home to go to bed—for he was still following Mr. Crow's plan—Buster noticed Johnnie and wondered what he was doing. But as soon as he went inside the house he forgot all about Johnnie Green. And when, a few moments later, there was a terrible sound

of scraping and scratching in the long hall that led to the innermost part of the house, Buster Bumblebee never once thought to mention to anyone that he had seen Johnnie in the dooryard.

VII

A JUGFUL OF BUMBLEBEES

When the workers—as well as Buster Bumblebee—heard the raking, scraping sound in the hall of their house they all stopped what they were doing and shrilled "An enemy!" And with one accord they rushed for the front door. They were terribly angry.

Not wishing to miss anything that was going to happen, Buster joined the mob and went sailing out into the open meadow. And there, quite close to the door, stood the queer object that Buster had noticed together with Johnnie Green only a minute before. He wondered now what that

strange thing was; for Buster Bumblebee did not know a jug when he saw one. And neither did the workers, nor any other member of the Bumblebee family.

"That's the enemy!" cried Buster suddenly, pointing to the jug. "It was talking out of its mouth right into Johnnie Green's ear when I came home."

Sounding a dreadful battle cry, all the workers turned upon the jug and buzzed so near it that they couldn't help hearing the same roaring from inside it to which Johnnie Green had listened with so much pleasure.

"Buster's almost right!" several of the workers shouted. "The enemy has hidden inside this thing. And we'll have to go in and sting him."

At that the workers began to pop into the jug, which Johnnie Green had thoughtfully left uncorked. And Buster Bumble-

bee, still eager to see everything, hastened to plunge inside the dim jug along with the rest.

It was soon not a dim but a dark jug. For the moment the last angry Bumblebee had disappeared inside it Johnnie Green stole quickly up from behind a haycock and slipped the cork into the mouth of the jug.

Johnnie's face wore a grin of joy. Perhaps he did not stop to realize that he was breaking up a happy home.

"I've got 'em!" he shouted aloud. And then he shook the jug vigorously, listening with delight to the sound of the splashing water within. Soon he set the jug behind the sheltering haycock and sat down beside it to make further plans. It was Johnnie's intention then to drown everything on the farm that carried a sting—wasps, hornets, honey bees. He was not

quite sure about mosquitoes, for he thought they might be hard to capture in great numbers.

Since he was intending to go swimming, he did not care to waste much more of the afternoon by staying in the meadow. So he proceeded to empty the jug.

It certainly *looked* as if the Bumblebee family had met with ill fortune. Several dozen workers—and Buster, too—lay limp and water-soaked upon the ground, when Johnnie Green hurried away to the spring to get more water for his father and the hired man, before he went to the mill-pond.

But it was not long before the half-drowned Buster and his companions began to stir slightly. Gradually the sun dried their wings and warmed their chilled bodies. And one by one they picked themselves up and scurried into their house.

They never knew exactly what had hap-

pened. But the workers agreed upon one point. They decided that somehow the whole trouble had been Buster's fault—though they couldn't explain in just what way.

Anyhow, after that the workers looked on Buster with more disfavor than ever. They were forever remarking how lazy and stupid he was. And even the trumpeter was heard to declare that she was ashamed of him—though he *was* her own brother.

VIII

BUSTER THE BOASTER

As far back as Buster Bumblebee could remember, he had heard about the Robber Fly. Even the fiercest fighters among the workers spoke his name with great awe. And from everything Buster could learn, his family had good reason to fear that dreadful enemy.

When Buster first left the house to make excursions to the flower garden and the clover field he had felt quite uneasy. He half-expected that the Robber Fly would pop out from behind a blossom at any moment and pounce upon him. For the Robber Fly was a bold, bad villain. And

those that were so unfortunate as to find themselves caught by him and held fast in his long, spiny feet had only a very slight chance of getting away from him.

No one of the Bumblebee family knew where the Robber Fly lived. But it was said that he often lurked on the ground, watching for victims. And when he spied one he would fly quickly up with a loud buzz and dart upon the unfortunate.

He had big, keen eyes which enabled him to see very clearly. And he had long, narrow wings which bore him through the air with great swiftness. And he had—worst of all—a sharp, piercing beak which was most frightful to gaze upon.

Now, in spite of his name the Robber Fly looked like no fly that was ever seen in Pleasant Valley. Strange as it may seem, in spite of his cruel beak, his long wings, and his spiny feet, he looked not a

little as if he might have been a near relation of Buster Bumblebee. Of course, any member of the Bumblebee family would have known at a glance that he was not one of them. But probably Johnnie Green—if he had noticed him—would have thought the Robber Fly some sort of bumblebee.

Since this monster was known to appear now and then in the neighborhood, one can easily understand why Buster Bumblebee was a bit timid when he first began to venture abroad alone. But as time passed, his dread of meeting the Robber Fly gradually faded. Not only had nobody seen the Robber for a long while, but some began to say that they thought he must have met with an accident, or perhaps he had moved to other parts, and they didn't believe he would ever be heard of again. And Buster himself began to boast that he wasn't

afraid of the Robber Fly and said that he was sorry that the Robber had gone away before he had had a chance to see him.

Buster's mother, the Queen, happened to hear her son make that remark one day. And she promptly told him that he was a stupid, silly boaster.

"If you knew what happened to your poor father last fall you would never want even to hear the Robber Fly's name mentioned again," the Queen declared, as a shiver—or a shudder—or both—passed up and down her royal back.

But Buster Bumblebee, being very young and somewhat stupid as well, said "Oh, nonsense!" under his breath, so low that his mother, the Queen, could not hear him.

IX

THE ROBBER FLY AT LAST

THOUGH Buster's mother, the Queen, did not hear him when he said "Oh, nonsense!" under his breath, there were others standing near him that caught the words. And they were quite indignant that anybody should scoff at the Queen like that.

They were workers—those that overheard Buster Bumblebee's remark when his mother as much as told him that he had better beware of the wicked Robber Fly. They were workers; and they did not approve of the lazy Buster.

"Let's teach that young loafer a les-

son!" they said to one another (there were three of them). And straightway they began to scheme and plan how they should give Buster Bumblebee a thorough fright, in the hope of making him more respectful to his mother, the Queen.

At least, that is what the workers said. But, as a matter of fact, each of them had reasons of her own for wanting to scare Buster. Indeed, there wasn't a worker in the house that was not disgusted with his laziness. And if he hadn't been the son of the Queen they would certainly have driven him out into the wide world long before.

Of course, Buster had no idea of what was afoot. He continued to tell everybody how sorry he was that he had never met the Robber Fly, until a few began to believe that he must be very brave indeed. But they were those that didn't know him

well. As for the workers, there wasn't one in the Bumblebee household that was deceived by Buster's bold talk. They all knew him for the coward he was.

Well, the very next day after Buster's impertinence to his mother a worker called Peevish Peggy stopped and spoke to him as he sat on a clover-head.

"If I were you I wouldn't come near the clover patch," she said. "You know the Robber Fly often prowls about on the ground. And it would be easy for him to catch you on a clover-top, you're so fat and clumsy. . . . Why don't you dine on the hollyhocks in the flower garden? They are high, and much safer."

Buster Bumblebee seemed greatly amused.

"Ho, ho!" he laughed—as well as "Ha, ha!" And then he said: "It seems to me that you are the one that ought to buzz

around the hollyhocks, since you are so nervous about the Robber Fly."

The worker, Peevish Peggy, at once flew into a temper.

"You'd better look out!" she warned Buster. "Once the Robber Fly pounces on you you'll be so frightened you can't even squirm."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Buster.

The quick-tempered worker, Peevish Peggy, looked slyly over her shoulder and nodded slightly.

Buster did not see the form that crept nearer and nearer to him, a little later. And he was still chuckling to himself when he heard a terrible humming. Then all at once he felt himself seized and held in a grip like iron.

He was sure that the Robber Fly had him at last. And he was too frightened for anything.

X

BUSTER MAKES A SPEECH

At first, when he found himself in the grip of what he was sure must be the Robber Fly, Buster Bumblebee was so alarmed that he could not even scream. But in a moment or two he found his voice. And he shrieked "Help! Help!" in a most frantic tone, hoping that some one would come and save him.

But nobody came. And Buster expected every instant to feel the cruel beak of the Robber Fly, when there was a sudden commotion behind his back. Some-

body else cried out now. And Buster knew the voice, too. Yes! Buster was sure that Peevish Peggy had come to help him. But there was one thing that puzzled him. Peevish Peggy seemed to be fully as frightened as Buster himself. At least, her cries sounded as if she were in great terror.

Probably she's afraid the Robber Fly has hurt me, Buster thought. And he reflected that in spite of her sharp tongue Peevish Peggy was more kind-hearted than he had ever dreamed.

The next instant Buster felt himself suddenly released. At the same time something swept him off the clover-top; and he barely managed to save himself from a bad fall.

Somewhere he could hear a loud buzz, as of several angry voices. But he did not care to show himself enough to find out

what was happening. For the time being he was content to stay snugly hidden among the thick clover leaves.

After a while the uproar ceased. But even then Buster Bumblebee was in no hurry to leave his shelter.

When he did at last reach home he found the whole family much upset. Everybody was talking at once. And in a household of more than two hundred that meant that the noise was almost deafening.

Naturally, Buster Bumblebee wanted to know what was the matter. It was a long time, however, before anyone would—or could—listen to him. But at last he succeeded in getting the ear of the trumpeter.

"Haven't you heard the news?" she asked. "The Robber Fly came to the clover patch to-day. And Peevish Peggy had a very narrow escape. If it hadn't

been for several other workers who happened to be gathering clover nectar nearby, there's no telling where she would be now."

"Where is she?" Buster inquired.

"Resting in bed," the trumpeter explained. (Even Buster wondered how she could rest with all that racket in the house!) "She's had a bad fright, poor thing!" the trumpeter added.

Buster Bumblebee suddenly grew much excited. And he climbed up on a table and shouted for everybody to be quiet.

"I don't believe you know about me!" he cried, as soon as the house was still. "The Robber Fly attacked me. But *I* don't need to go to bed. I'm not the least bit nervous."

Several of the family near him began to titter.

And the Queen herself stepped forward

and commanded Buster to hop down from the table at once.

He obeyed promptly. But he was quite puzzled. No one seemed to believe what he said. And it was a long time before he learned what had actually happened. At last a spiteful worker informed him that he had never been in the clutches of the Robber Fly at all. Peevish Peggy and some of her companions had played a trick on Buster—because of his boasting. She had seized him when he wasn't looking. And he had screamed so loud that the Robber Fly—who happened to be near—had heard him.

Then the Robber Fly had rushed up and seized Peevish Peggy, who had promptly let go of Buster Bumblebee.

The worker who told these things to Buster Bumblebee actually laughed in his face. And Buster was so surprised—and

so crestfallen—that he couldn't say a word for a long time.

And never again did Buster mention the Robber Fly's name.

XI

THE DRONE

YES! Buster Bumblebee was a drone. He never gathered any nectar from the flowers and brought it home to help swell the family store of honey. He let the workers of the household do that. And since they never complained, but seemed to enjoy their drudgery, Buster saw no reason why he should interfere with the honey-making in any way.

He was content to live a life of ease and pleasure. And never having to bestir himself—never having to hurry or worry—he quickly grew into a somewhat clumsy and blundering young gentleman. And what

was still worse, this handsome young idler soon gained the name of being none too keen-witted. *Good-natured, but a bit stupid*—that was what the field and forest folk called Buster Bumblebee.

But bless you! *He* never bothered his head with what people said. When anybody called him a drone he would only laugh. And when some busybody asked him for pity's sake why didn't he go to work, he would merely grin and reply that he was a queen's son and that queens' sons never did anything except eat a plenty and have a good time.

Well, that must have been an excellent answer, for it seemed to keep people quiet. And it made some think that perhaps Buster Bumblebee was not quite so dull as he often appeared.

Once, indeed, he had thought it would be fun to help with the honey-making. So

he stopped one of the workers when she was on her way home with a load of nectar.

"Let me help you carry that home!" Buster said.

Now, the workers were all a shrewish lot. They were terribly short-tempered—especially if anybody interfered with their work, which they loved better than anything else in the world.

"Don't you come near me!" snapped the worker angrily. "Keep away or I'll sting you!" she threatened.

Naturally, a happy, easy-going person like Buster Bumblebee wasn't looking for trouble of that sort. So he dodged clumsily out of sight behind a milkweed; and he made up his mind then that that was the last time he would ever have anything to do with one of those testy honey-makers.

Of course it was a bit difficult to avoid

them entirely in a family of two hundred or more, all living together in a medium-sized house. And so Buster Bumblebee decided at last that he would be far happier in some place that was not so crowded, and where there was no work going on—and no workers.

And so, one fine August day, Buster left the family home, never to set foot inside it again. But he often passed that way and lingered just outside the door, to listen to the music and the sound of dancing within.

That was the thing that he missed most; for, like all his family, he was fond of music. And he was forever humming to himself as he sipped nectar from the clover-tops or the flowers in Farmer Green's garden.

XII

THE CARPENTER BEE

After Buster Bumblebee left the old house in the meadow, where Mrs. Field Mouse had once lived, he had no real home. Like that quarrelsome rascal, Peter Mink, he would crawl into any good place that he happened to find. Sometimes Buster chose a hole in a fence-rail, and sometimes a crack in the side of one of the farm-buildings. He really didn't much care where he spent the night, provided it was not too far from the flower garden or the clover field.

Not being one of the worrying kind, Buster was quite contented with his lot.

And it would never have occurred to him to live in any different style had it not been for a remark that little Mrs. Ladybug made to him one day.

"I should think—" she said— "I should think that the son of a queen ought to have a house of his own, instead of sleeping—like a tramp—where night overtakes him."

Now, Mrs. Ladybug's words did not offend Buster Bumblebee in the least.

"No doubt you know best," he told her. "But how can I build a house? I've never worked in all my life. And I don't intend to begin now."

"Why not get some one to build a house for you?" she asked him.

"I never thought of that!" he cried. "Whom would you suggest?"

"I know the very person!" Mrs. Ladybug told him. "He's a Carpenter Bee; and he lives in the big poplar by the brook.

Perhaps you know him. Johnnie Green calls him Whiteface," she said. "They do say he's a very skillful workman."

Buster Bumblebee replied that he had never met the Carpenter, but that he would go and see him at once. So over to the big poplar he flew. And soon he was knocking boldly at the door of the Carpenter's house.

Pretty soon a mild-appearing person, who looked not a little like Buster himself, stepped through the doorway. He wore a white patch across his front and his clothes needed brushing sadly, for they showed many marks of sawdust.

"Are you the Carpenter?" Buster Bumblebee inquired.

The mild stranger said he was.

"How would you like to build a house for me?" Buster asked him.

The Carpenter seemed greatly surprised at the suggestion.

"I don't think I'd like it very well," he said timidly.

"Why not?" Buster demanded.

"Well, I'm busy building an addition to my house," the Carpenter explained. "And besides, you're a total stranger. I've never seen you before; and we might quarrel if I did any work for you."

"Oh, no!" Buster Bumblebee assured him. "You couldn't quarrel with me, because I'm the most peace-loving person in Pleasant Valley."

"There!" the Carpenter cried. "I knew as soon as I set eyes on you that we were bound not to agree. . . . I've always claimed that there's no peacefuller person than I am in this whole neighborhood. So here we are, quarreling already!"

"Maybe you're right," Buster said then.

"I'll agree that you like peace more than I do. But remember! Next to you there's no one that hates a fight the way I do—and hates work, too!"

XIII

THE CARPENTER'S PROMISE

WHEN Buster Bumblebee told Whiteface, the Carpenter Bee, that he hated to work, that honest artisan stared at his caller in astonishment.

"You're a queer one!" he said at last. "But there's something about you that I can't help liking, though it would be hard for me to say just what it is—so please don't ask me!"

"Then you'll make me a house, after all?" Buster cried joyfully.

"I will," the Carpenter promised, "just as soon as I finish the addition I'm building to my own home."

"Good!" said Buster. And wishing the

Carpenter Bee a hasty good-afternoon, he flew off to find little Mrs. Ladybug and tell her that he was going to have a house of his own, just as she had suggested.

After that the news spread quickly, for Mrs. Ladybug was somewhat of a gossip —in a pleasant enough way. Being much interested in her neighbors, she liked to talk about their affairs. And now she told everyone that Buster Bumblebee was going to have a fine new house, and that the Carpenter was going to build it for him.

Naturally, Buster's friends all told him that they were glad to hear of his good fortune. And whenever anyone mentioned the matter, Buster promptly invited him to come to a party that he intended to give as soon as his new home was ready to move into.

"Mrs. Ladybug tells me that I ought to have a house-warming," Buster explained.

And though some of his neighbors didn't know what he meant by that, they said "Of course!" and tried to look wise.

There was only one thing about the whole affair that annoyed Buster: when people asked him when his new house would be finished he was unable to tell them.

"Well, when is the Carpenter going to start building it?" they would ask. And he could only reply that as soon as the Carpenter completed the addition to his own house he had promised to begin to build Buster's.

Now, many people were satisfied with that answer. But there were some (they were the curious ones) that insisted on knowing exactly when that would be. And then there was nothing that Buster Bumblebee could do except to admit that he didn't know.

"Why don't you find out about it?" asked the most curious person in all Pleasant Valley—and that, of course, was old Mr. Crow. "If I were you I'd go to the Carpenter and *insist* on his telling me."

So Buster Bumbiebee began calling at the Carpenter's house every day. Some days he even went there two or three times. It must have been annoying for anybody as busy as the Carpenter to be interrupted so often—and always for the same reason. But he never once thought of being angry—though he did wish that Buster would let him work in peace.

His answer to Buster's question was always the same: "I'm afraid my house won't be finished to-morrow."

XIV

BAD NEWS

It is not surprising that the Carpenter's answer failed to satisfy Buster Bumblebee.

"I really must know when my house will be ready!" he cried at last. "I've invited all my friends to a house-warming. And how can I have one unless I have a house to warm?"

The Carpenter slowly shook his head.

"Don't ask me!" he said wearily. "I've enough to trouble me right here at home without answering any riddles for strangers."

"I suppose you'll get your house finished sometime," Buster ventured.

"I hope to," said the Carpenter, "though it certainly won't be to-morrow, on account of all the interruptions I'm having to-day."

Now, that honest workman meant his remark to be a hint. But the idea never occurred to Buster that the Carpenter had *him* in mind, when he mentioned interruptions. And Buster went right on talking.

"I'd suggest that you work nights as well as in the daytime," he said.

"I'll think about it," the Carpenter promised. "And now," he added, "now I must go back to my carpentering—if you'll excuse me."

And before Buster could say another word the Carpenter slipped through his doorway and vanished.

"I hope he'll do as I suggested," Buster Bumblebee said to himself, as he moved aimlessly away from the big poplar where

the Carpenter lived. "If I shouldn't get my house until cold weather comes I don't see how I could have a house-warming; and then all my friends would be disappointed."

The more he thought about the matter the more disturbed he became, until at last (on the following day) he felt that he simply *must* go back and speak to the Carpenter again.

Buster noticed, as he drew near to the Carpenter's house once more, that there was a crowd in the Carpenter's dooryard. Everybody looked so sorrowful that Buster was sure something dreadful had happened.

"What's the matter?" he asked little Mrs. Ladybug, who was wiping her eyes with a lace pocket-handkerchief.

"It's the Carpenter," she answered, as soon as she could speak. "He's disap-

peared. And now we've just heard what's become of him. Johnnie Green caught him yesterday and has made him a prisoner!"

That was bad news indeed—for Buster Bumblebee. He was so sorry that he swallowed hard three or four times before he could say a word. And then he began to groan.

"This is terrible!" he moaned at last. And all the Carpenter's neighbors gathered around him and said what a kind-hearted young gentleman he was, but that it was no more than you might expect of a queen's son.

"The Carpenter must have been a dear friend of yours," quavered old Daddy Longlegs, tottering up to Buster and peering into his face.

"Oh, no!" said Buster Bumblebee. "But he promised to build a house for me as

soon as he had finished working on his own. So his being a prisoner is pretty friends to a house-warming and I don't hard on me. For I've invited all my know what to do."

XV

THE PRISONER

Buster Bumblebee did not stay long in the dooryard of the missing Carpenter. Saying a mournful good-by to the sad company, he flew away toward Farmer Green's house. It was there that the Carpenter was a prisoner. And Buster could only hope that he might find some way of setting the woodworker free.

Luckily Buster Bumblebee did not have to look long for what he was seeking. On the porch of the farmhouse he soon discovered a honey box, with glass sides. And whom should he see inside it, sitting on a little heap of wild rose leaves and looking

forlorn and unhappy—whom should Buster see but the Carpenter.

Buster crowded close against the glass and began to call so loud that the Carpenter couldn't help hearing him. And then the poor fellow came and stood on the other side of the glass barrier, as near Buster as he could get.

"Why don't you come out?" Buster asked.

"How can I?" said the Carpenter. "Don't you see that I'm a prisoner?"

"Yes! But why don't you cut your way out?" Buster Bumblebee asked him.

"Well, I've tried," the Carpenter confessed. "But this glass is so hard that I can't even dent it."

"But you're a woodworker—not a glassworker!" exclaimed Buster Bumblebee. "And if you're as skillful as people say you are, you ought to be able to bore a

hole through one of the wooden ends of your prison."

At that suggestion the Carpenter looked decidedly happier.

"That's so!" he exclaimed. "I wish I had thought of that before."

Of course it was Buster that thought of the plan, then; but he didn't say so to the Carpenter. Instead, Buster shouted through the glass:

"Get to work at once! And I'll wait for you."

So the Carpenter began to cut away at an end of the honey box. But unluckily for him, he had hardly begun his task when Johnnie Green came dancing out upon the porch, followed by two strange boys.

"Here he is!" cried Johnnie, kneeling beside the Carpenter's prison. "See him! Do you know what he is?"

The two strange boys did not wear overalls, like Johnnie Green. But they did not seem to mind that. They knelt right down beside him in their spick-and-span velvet suits and stared curiously at the Carpenter.

"He's a bumblebee!" one of them exclaimed. And the other echoed immediately, "He's a bumblebee!" Being twins, and looking just alike, they always tried to do and say the same things.

Johnnie Green did not tell them their mistake. With an odd smile he slid aside one of the glass doors of the Carpenter's prison and picked the frightened captive up with his fingers.

"Oh!" cried the two guests. "Won't he sting you?"

"Naw!" said Johnnie Green scornfully. "He won't sting me. He knows me."

For a few minutes the two city boys—

for that is what they were—for a few minutes they watched Johnnie Green expectantly. They seemed to be waiting for something. And they were. They were waiting for Johnnie Green to be stung.

But nothing of the sort happened. And soon one of them said:

"I wish I had a pet bumblebee."

"So do I!" said the other twin.

"Do you?" asked Johnnie Green. "Well, —I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you each a honey box. And maybe you can catch some bumblebees, if you want to."

Of course, the twins were delighted. And Johnnie Green appeared pleased too. Perhaps he should have told his little friends that his pet was not a bumblebee at all—but a carpenter bee—and that carpenter bees never sting people.

But Johnnie Green did not always do just exactly as he ought to have done.

XVI

THE TWINS IN THE CLOVER PATCH

The twins—Johnnie Green's guests—each with a honey box in his hand, began at once to hunt for bumblebees. And if Buster Bumblebee had been wiser he would have flown away at once.

But he had no idea that he would have any trouble dodging a boy—especially a city boy. So he lingered on the porch to see what happened. As soon as Johnnie Green should put the Carpenter back in his prison Buster intended to urge him once more to cut his way through the wood—and to freedom.

Soon Buster had his chance. Again he crowded close to the glass door of the Carpenter's cage. And then Johnnie Green's sharp eyes spied him.

"There's one!" said Johnnie Green to one of the twins. And at that the eager youngster pounced quickly on Buster, picked him up gingerly, and popped him quickly into a prison exactly like the one that held the Carpenter.

"He didn't sting me!" cried Buster's captor proudly, while Johnnie Green stared at him in astonishment and—it must be confessed—with some disappointment, too.

Now, Johnnie knew a good many things about the field and forest folk in Pleasant Valley. He knew that the Carpenter (or Whiteface, as Johnnie called him) couldn't sting anybody. But he had always supposed that all bumblebees stung

fiercely. And that was where he was mistaken. It was true that Buster's mother, the Queen, could sting when she wanted to. And all those hot-tempered workers who lived with her had stings just as hot as their tempers. But Buster and his brothers (for he had brothers) were not armed with such weapons.

Naturally, the other twin was now more eager than ever to capture a bumblebee of his own. And since Johnnie did not want to disappoint a guest he soon suggested that they go over to the clover patch.

"There's a lot of bumblebees over there, always," said Johnnie Green hopefully.

So Buster had a free ride to the clover field; for his twin insisted on taking his new pet right along with him.

"Besides, I may want to catch some more like him," he explained.

Looking out through the glass sides of

his prison, which his captor held tightly in one hand, Buster Bumblebee saw many of his mother's workers hovering about the clover-tops, gathering nectar for the honeycomb at home.

The twins saw the workers, too. They were delighted. And so was Johnnie Green.

"Take all the bumblebees you want!" said Johnnie. "My father won't care."

Both twins grabbed at the same time. They both shrieked at the same time, too—for each of them felt a sharp pain, as if a red-hot needle had been run into his finger. And Buster Bumblebee felt himself falling. Then followed a crash of splintering glass. And in another moment Buster was hurrying away across the clover field.

When he was stung by the worker he had seized, Buster's twin had dropped the

honey box. And it had fallen squarely upon a rock and broken.

If Buster had not been in such haste to escape he would have heard still another shout. For the news spread like wildfire among the workers—the news that an army of boys had attacked them. And a terrible-tempered relation of Buster's known as Peppery Polly darted at Johnnie Green and buried her stirg deep in the back of that young gentleman's sunbrowned neck.

As for the Carpenter, everybody quite forgot about him. Johnnie and the twins were too busy putting mud poultices on their wounds, to ease their aches and pains, to think of the prisoner they had left on the farmhouse porch. It was not until the next day that Johnnie Green remembered his new pet. And when he went to see him then the honey box was empty. The

Carpenter had cut a tunnel through the wall of his prison.

Later the Carpenter sent a message to Buster, by little Mrs. Ladybug.

"The Carpenter has lost so much time," she told Buster, "that he thinks he will never be able to finish the addition to his house. So he says you'll have to get somebody else to build your new home for you."

At first Buster was disappointed. But he soon recovered his good spirits.

"After all, it's just as well," he remarked cheerfully. "I know where there's a fine new house right in the clover patch. And I'll move into it at once."

Of course he meant the honey box which the boy had dropped upon the rock and forgotten. So Buster had his new home without the help of the Carpenter. And all his friends agreed that the house-warm-

ing he gave was the most successful that ever was known in those parts. It took place on the hottest day of the summer. And Buster's house was so warm that three of his guests almost had sunstrokes—and had to be helped home.

XVII

BUSTER LEARNS OF THE RAISING BEE

"YES!" said Jimmy Rabbit. "I hear that there's going to be a raising bee at Farmer Green's place to-morrow. And if I were you I should certainly want to be there."

Being very good-natured, Jimmy Rabbit was always ready to talk to anybody he happened to meet, no matter how small the other person might be. And now, while he was nibbling at Farmer Green's lettuce, he had chanced to glance up and spy Buster Bumblebee, who was buzzing about the tall hollyhocks, which made a sort of hedge where the flower and the vegetable garden met.

"A raising bee!" Buster Bumblebee exclaimed, when he heard Jimmy Rabbit's bit of news. "I've never in my life seen that kind of bee—nor heard of it, either. . . . It must be a great curiosity."

"Yes!" said Jimmy Rabbit. "And you ought not to miss seeing this one. I'd like to go over to the farmhouse to-morrow myself—if I had the time."

"Well, I'm going, anyhow," Buster declared. "And when next I see you I'll tell you all about this strange bee. For all we know now it may be nothing but a honey bee that has changed his name."

Jimmy Rabbit only smiled at his small friend. He said nothing at all—though he looked uncommonly wise.

"What time to-morrow can I get a peep at this 'raising bee,' as he calls himself?" Buster Bumblebee inquired.

"You had better plan to reach the farm-

yard at nine o'clock sharp," Jimmy Rabbit advised him.

"How shall I know where to look?" Buster asked him.

"Oh! you'll have no trouble finding the raising bee," Jimmy replied. "Just follow the crowd! All of Farmer Green's friends for miles around will be there."

"Is that so?" said Buster. "What are they coming for?"

"Why, they've heard about the raising bee, too," Jimmy told him. "Farmer Green has invited everybody to come to his house. And there'll be plenty to eat for everyone. No doubt they'll have a dance, too, in the afternoon—just before milking time. Of course they'll all have to go home in time to milk the cows," Jimmy explained.

"I suppose so," Buster remarked. "And I must say I'm glad that I have no cows,

for it has always seemed to me that they are only a nuisance."

Jimmy Rabbit agreed heartily in that opinion.

"Yes!" Buster Bumblebee continued. "Farmer Green has many strange ways. Now, what's the sense of having a vegetable garden? And yet I understand that he always plants one over there where you're sitting."

Jimmy Rabbit shook his head.

"I can't quite agree with you," he said quickly, "though I've always claimed that a flower garden is just a waste of time."

"What a strange notion!" cried Buster Bumblebee. "To my way of thinking, this flower garden is the best thing Farmer Green has—unless it's the clover patch."

Now, some people would have flown into a temper at once on being disputed like

that. But Jimmy Rabbit was never known to be angry.

"Billy Woodchuck would agree with you about the clover," he said with a chuckle. "You know he's very fond of clover-tops."

"He's a sensible chap," Buster Bumblebee declared. "And speaking of clover makes me so hungry for some that I'm going to the clover patch this very minute."

So Buster darted away, calling out as he went that he would meet Jimmy at the hollyhock hedge on the next morning but one.

"I'll tell you all about the raising bee," he promised once more.

And Jimmy Rabbit laughed so heartily that he almost choked over a choice lettuce leaf.

XVIII

FOLLOWING THE CROWD

Well, the next day Buster Bumblebee arrived at Farmer Green's place just as the cuckoo clock in the kitchen was striking nine. And he knew at once that Jimmy Rabbit must have told him the truth about the raising bee, for the farmyard was crowded with wagons and carryalls and buggies and gigs. There were people everywhere—so many that Buster thought all the world must be there. And he began to look about him carefully.

But nowhere could he find what he had come to see. So he asked a ruffianly looking wasp where the raising bee was. But

the wasp, who was hurrying by, merely glanced at Buster and said, with a frown:

"Follow the crowd!"

Buster remembered then that that was exactly what Jimmy Rabbit had told him to do. And now, as he looked all around, he noticed that Farmer Green was already leading the way to a pile of lumber near the old cow-barn. Everybody was following him. And a good many small boys began to shout to nobody in particular, "Hurrah! hurrah! She's going up!"

Buster Bumblebee hastened to overtake the crowd.

"They must mean the raising bee," he said to himself. "And from what those boys are saying I gather that it's a *lady* raising bee and she's going to fly for the company."

In his eagerness to see everything that was happening, Buster buzzed very close

to a good many people. And though most of them paid little heed to him, there was one boy who slapped at him with his hat —and all but hit him, too.

After that Buster was more careful. He flew higher. And at last he found a fine seat on a tall sunflower, from which he could view every move that was made.

Farmer Green's guests—that is, the *men,* for the women had not left the house—the guests all took off their coats and began to arrange themselves around some huge timbers that lay upon the ground. And a great shouting arose. Everybody seemed to be talking at once. And the small boys were everywhere, chasing one another about and getting in everyone's way.

Then all was quiet for a few minutes while Farmer Green said something to the men. And as soon as he had stopped talking some of the men began to lift a sort

of framework of wood into the air. When they had raised it exactly as Farmer Green wanted it other men began to pound about the foot of it with hammers. But Buster Bumblebee—though he watched everything very closely—hadn't the slightest idea what they were doing.

"Hi, there!" he called to old dog Spot. "Where's the raising bee?"

Old Spot promptly looked bewildered.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he replied. "I don't know anything about any bee. And I wish you wouldn't trouble me with your silly questions. These men are helping us to build our new barn; and I'm too busy to talk to anyone."

Buster Bumblebee was certainly disappointed. And he soon decided that Jimmy Rabbit must have been mistaken. It wasn't the raising bee, after all, that had brought

all the neighbors together there. They had come to help Farmer Green with his new barn! Old dog Spot had said so. And he ought to know, if anyone did.

XIX

THE FEAST AT FARMER GREEN'S

In spite of his disappointment at not seeing the raising bee (that new kind of bee that Jimmy Rabbit had told him about) Buster Bumblebee decided that he would stay at Farmer Green's place and watch the men put up the frame of the new barn. He remembered that Jimmy had said there would be things to eat afterwards—and maybe a dance, besides.

Although the barn was a big one there were so many people to help that it was hardly later than midday when the great timbers were all in place. And then the

men caught up their coats and strolled back to the dooryard. The small boys had all hurried ahead of them as soon as they noticed that the women and girls were already setting generous dishes of goodies upon long tables beneath the shade of the maple trees in front of the farmhouse.

And when he saw what was going on Buster Bumblebee hastened to the maple grove too. He intended to taste of every kind of food that was there, in the hope of finding some dainty that he would like.

So for some time he busied himself buzzing up and down the long table, alighting on heaps of doughnuts and cookies, pies, cakes, bread and butter, baked beans and ever so many other good things.

But Buster Bumblebee did not find anything that really pleased him until he paused at a fat sugar-bowl. Since the sugar was sweet he couldn't help liking

that, though it did seem somewhat tasteless to him after his feasts among the clover-tops.

"This is the only food here that's worth eating," he remarked to himself, "though perhaps the cake would not be bad, once a person learned to like it."

Luckily Buster had time to make a hearty meal off the sugar before a red-cheeked girl shooed him away. And then Farmer Green and all his friends sat down at the long tables.

How they did eat! They began with pie. And Buster Bumblebee, flying lazily above their heads, noticed with amazement the enormous pieces that disappeared into the mouths of men, women and children. One mouthful such as they took would have fed him at least a month. And there was one boy called Bill who stowed away enough each time his fork traveled to his

mouth to nourish Buster Bumblebee a whole summer.

"That boy is making a pig of himself!" Buster Bumblebee exclaimed, right out loud. But since nobody understood what he said, no one paid any attention to his remark. "You'll be ill, if you're not careful," Buster buzzed right in the greedy boy's ear.

But the youngster known as Bill only moved his head slightly. And to Buster's alarm he continued to bolt huge mouthfuls of everything within his reach.

It was really a terrible sight. Buster Bumblebee was so fascinated by it that he sat right down on a low-hanging maple bough and kept his eyes fixed on that marvellous boy.

Before the feast came to an end the boy Bill's face underwent an odd change. In the beginning it had worn a wide smile.

But at last Buster saw a look of pain steal over Bill's somewhat besmeared features. And beneath his coating of tan he seemed to have grown pale.

Before long Buster was sure he heard a groan, though no one of the merrymakers paid the slightest heed to it. Everyone was too busy eating and talking with his neighbors to notice Bill's distress.

Then came another groan—and another—and another—and another, until finally greedy Bill clapped both his hands across the front of his jacket and let out a terrific roar.

"Ah!" said Buster Bumblebee. "You have a stomachache, young man. And it's no wonder."

XX

BUSTER AND THE FIDDLERS

THERE was a great rattling of knives and forks dropped suddenly upon plates and a clatter of cups set hastily upon saucers. For when the boy with the stomachache screamed aloud in his agony all of Farmer Green's guests turned towards him to see what was the matter.

Buster Bumblebee saw a large woman dressed in bright red rush up to the boy Bill and lead him away towards the farmhouse, quite doubled up with pain.

"That's his mother!" Buster decided. "And it's lucky for him that she's here."

Everybody else seemed to think like-

wise. And no one appeared much worried. At least, all the company fell upon the feast once more. And in a surprisingly short time everything but the dishes had vanished.

Still the people lingered there and talked —or the grown-ups did, anyhow (of course the boys and girls didn't want to sit at a table after the good things had all been eaten off it). And Buster Bumblebee had just made up his mind that the whole affair was very dull! Yes! he had begun to wish he had not wasted his time at Farmer Green's party, when suddenly he heard something that sent a tingle all through him.

It was a most delightful sound. And noticing that the people were leaving the scene of the banquet, Buster again recalled Jimmy Rabbit's advice to "follow the crowd." So he found himself shortly

in the carriage-house, from which everything on wheels had been run outside into the farmyard.

At one side of the great square room sat three men, each holding a queer wooden object, upon which he sawed busily without appearing to cut anything. And Buster soon learned that the bewitching sound came from the sawing.

"How do you like the music?" said a voice in Buster's ear. He turned quickly. And he saw then that old dog Spot had followed the crowd too and was sitting in the doorway, where everyone had to walk around him. He seemed to be enjoying himself. And he kept thumping the floor with his tail as if he were trying to keep time with the tune.

"The music is beautiful," Buster Bumblebee said in reply to Spot's question. "But there's something I don't quite un-

derstand. I've seen men sawing wood before, but they made no such sound as this."

Old dog Spot couldn't help smiling the least bit.

"Why, those men aren't sawing wood. They're *fiddling*," he explained; "three fiddlers fiddling upon fiddles. . . . There's going to be a dance, you know," old dog Spot continued. "And of course nobody cares to dance without music."

"Oh, certainly not!" Buster Bumblebee agreed. And he began to be glad he had come to the farmyard, after all. You see, he was fond of music and dancing. And he thought the music played by the three fiddlers was too wonderful for words.

Soon the floor was crowded with merry people who bowed and scraped to one another and danced breakdowns and cut pigeon-wings and other capers, while Buster Bumblebee flitted gaily about just

above their bobbing heads, trying his best to keep time to the music and wishing that he had brought some of his friends along with him to Farmer Green's party.

As for the raising bee, Buster had completely forgotten it. He was having so much fun at the dance that the real reason for his coming to Farmer Green's place had quite slipped out of his mind.

XXI

THE BUMBLEBEE IN THE PUMPKIN

Of course the dancers at Farmer Green's party had to stop now and then to get their breath. And the fiddlers, too, had to pause in order to rest. That is, two of them found it necessary to lay their fiddles aside once in a while. And it was no wonder; for they had each eaten a whole custard pie.

But the third fiddler was different. He was a man after Buster Bumblebee's own heart. He seemed to love to make music and never tired of coaxing the jolliest tunes out of his old fiddle that anybody

could hope to hear. *He* only laughed when his fellow fiddlers lay back in their chairs and mopped their red faces. And just to keep the company in good spirits —and because he couldn't help it—this frolicsome fiddler would start right ahead and play something that was sure to set a body's feet a-going and make him feel so happy that he would want to shout right out—good and loud.

Whenever this merry musician played all alone like that Buster Bumblebee stayed close by him in order to hear better. And so it was that Buster at last met with a surprise. He was bobbing about with a great deal of pleasure to the strains of a lively tune when he heard something that made him settle quickly upon a beam above the jolly fiddler's head.

He wanted to sit still and listen. (Somehow he always had to buzz more or less

when he was flying.) Yes! he wanted to listen closely because he was almost certain that he heard the buzzing of a strange bee. And the sound seemed to come right out of the fiddle!

From his seat on the beam Buster Bumblebee looked down at the fiddle, upon which the fiddler was scraping away at a great rate; and he noticed then that there were two openings in it through which a bee might crawl with the greatest ease.

"That's it!" Buster Bumblebee shouted right out loud. "The bee's inside the fiddle. . . . I don't believe the fiddler knows it!" he chuckled.

And then another idea came into Buster's head. He wondered if that bee was not the raising bee, which he had gone to so much trouble to see and which he had almost given up finding.

Then, happening to glance about him,

Buster noticed that many of the people in the place were smiling at one another and nodding their heads wisely, as if to say: "There's the bee! Do you hear him buzz?"

And old dog Spot, who still sat in the doorway, seemed to be smiling, too. Anyhow, his jaws were open so wide that his tongue was hanging out of his mouth.

Feeling very wise himself, Buster Bumblebee bustled over to the doorway and said to old Spot:

"Do you hear that bee? He's inside the fiddle!"

Then old Spot actually laughed aloud.

"You're mistaken," he replied. "That's the bumblebee in the pumpkin."

"Bumblebee!" Buster cried. "Pardon me—but you are mistaken yourself. That's no bumblebee. No member of my family ever buzzed like that. . . . It must be a raising bee."

"Perhaps you know best," said old Spot. "But the people here all say it's a bumblebee—in a pumpkin."

"What pumpkin?" Buster wanted to know.

"Well, that one—I suppose," old dog Spot told him, cocking an eye and an ear towards a big yellow pumpkin, which someone had set on a wide shelf on the wall.

Buster Bumblebee looked at the pumpkin. And then he darted straight to it. If there was a bee of any kind inside it, making that strange buzzing, he intended to have a good look at him.

XXII

SOMEONE'S MISTAKE

Though he alighted right on top of the pumpkin, which stood on the wide shelf in Farmer Green's carriage-house, Buster Bumblebee thought that the strange buzzing sound had grown fainter. He was sure that he had heard it more plainly when he was nearer the merry fiddler.

There was a gouge in the side of the fat pumpkin, into which he peered carefully. He even crawled into the small cavity himself. But there was nothing there. And he decided, after thinking deeply for some time, that there could not possibly be a bee inside the pumpkin.

As soon as he had made up his mind on that point Buster Bumblebee blustered back to old dog Spot once more.

"You're certainly wrong!" he exclaimed. "There's no bumblebee—nor any other sort of bee—anywhere near the pumpkin."

"There was one there only a moment ago," old Spot remarked with a sly smile.

"I didn't see him," said Buster Bumblebee, looking much puzzled.

"Well, *I* did," old Spot replied. "And that proves that I'm right."

Buster Bumblebee could think of no good retort to make at that moment. And since the odd buzzing had stopped, and all three fiddlers were tuning up for more dance music, in his excitement Buster forgot all about the raising bee again, the bumblebee in the pumpkin, and even his dispute with old dog Spot.

So the dance went on. And at last, late

in the afternoon, the people suddenly remembered that they had to go home to milk the cows. Then the fiddlers put away their fiddles; for the dance had come to an end. And Buster Bumblebee was extremely sorry that it was so.

Now, Jimmy Rabbit had agreed to meet Buster at the hollyhock hedge between the flower and the vegetable garden, on the morning following the great gathering of Farmer Green's friends. At least, that was what Buster Bumblebee thought.

Unfortunately, however, the matter had slipped entirely from Jimmy Rabbit's mind. And although Buster went to the meeting-place each morning, he failed to find his long-eared friend there.

Luckily it was a pleasant spot in which to wait. So each day Buster breakfasted upon the flowers. And if it hadn't been for just one thing he wouldn't have cared

much whether Jimmy Rabbit ever came back to meet him or not. But Buster did want to tell Jimmy Rabbit that he had been mistaken about the raising bee. Jimmy Rabbit knew so much—he was always explaining things to people with such a knowing air—that Buster Bumblebee thought it would do Jimmy a world of good to understand that for once he was wrong.

If Buster had only visited the garden earlier in the morning he would have found Jimmy Rabbit easily enough. But Buster did not like to go abroad much until the sun had had a chance to dry the dew, for it was hard for him to fly when his wings were wet.

On the other hand, Jimmy Rabbit usually went to the garden at dawn, because he had an idea that lettuce was crisper and tasted better while the cool dew still

clung to it. But at last there came a morning when Jimmy was so late and Buster was so early in reaching the garden that their breakfast hours came at the same time.

XXIII

MAKING GAME OF OLD DOG SPOT

"WHERE have you been keeping yourself?" Buster Bumblebee cried, the moment he caught sight of Jimmy Rabbit's ears sticking up from behind a head of Farmer Green's lettuce. "It's quite plain that you forgot to meet me, so I might tell you about the raising bee."

At that Jimmy Rabbit promptly replied that he had come there each morning.

"Anyhow," he said, "you promised to meet me. And since you haven't met me until now it must be your fault, for you certainly haven't done as you agreed."

Buster Bumblebee looked puzzled. He was sure that the fault had not been his. But his wits were not so nimble as Jimmy Rabbit's. And he could think of no answer at all.

"Well, what do you know about the raising bee?" Jimmy asked him with an encouraging smile.

"You were mistaken about that," Buster told him eagerly. "There wasn't any raising bee. Farmer Green's neighbors for miles around came to help him put up the frame of his new barn. And afterwards they enjoyed a feast under the trees—and a dance."

Jimmy Rabbit began to shake in a very strange manner.

"Ho! ho!" he cried in a jolly voice. "You You saw a raising bee and didn't know it! are the one that's mistaken—and not I! Farmer Green's friends *raised* the timbers

for the barn. And that's why it's called a *raising* bee. Any helpful, neighborly gathering like that is known as a *bee*—though you may not be aware of that fact."

Buster Bumblebee stared open-mouthed. He had never suspected such a thing. But Jimmy Rabbit said it was so. And there was nothing to do but believe him.

"So they had something to eat—and a dance too, eh?" said Jimmy Rabbit pleasantly.

"Yes," said Buster, "and there was a bumblebee in a pumpkin, though I couldn't see him. But old dog Spot said he did. And I suppose I was mistaken, for I thought he was inside a fiddle."

And now Jimmy Rabbit was laughing again, holding his sides and shaking so hard that it seemed as if his ears would fall off if he didn't stop soon.

"No, you were not mistaken at all!" he cried, as soon as he could speak again. "That's an old, old tune. My grandfather has hummed it to me many a time. He used to say that there never was another tune just like it."

"What tune?" Buster Bumblebee asked him. "I must say I don't know what you're talking about."

"Why, *The Bumblebee in the Pumpkin!*" Jimmy Rabbit informed him. "That's the name of a tune. Every good fiddler knows it. And since the buzzing sound comes out of the fiddle, the bumblebee must be inside it, of course."

For a moment Buster looked almost peevish. He had intended to take Jimmy Rabbit down a peg by telling him he had been mistaken. And here was Jimmy Rabbit, explaining every strange thing, just as he always did! It was most an-

noying—so Buster thought. But all at once a comforting idea popped into his head.

"Old dog Spot was wrong, wasn't he?" Buster cried.

"He certainly was," Jimmy Rabbit replied.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Buster Bumblebee. "Isn't it odd how stupid some people are?"

"It certainly is!" said Jimmy Rabbit. And for some unknown reason he laughed harder than ever before.

But Buster Bumblebee did not mind that in the least. He thought that Jimmy Rabbit was making game of old dog Spot.

THE END

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